

Remarks/Arguments

In the January 19, 2005 office action, claims 10-11 were rejected under section 102(b) as being anticipated by Pence (US Patent No. 3,312,459). Claims 1-4, 6-9, 14-16 and 18-20 were rejected under section 102(b) as being anticipated by McIntyre (US Patent No. 1,229,109). Claims 1-17 and 19-20 were rejected under section 102(b) as being anticipated by Atkinson (US Patent No. 302,618). Claims 10-11 were rejected under section 102(b) as being anticipated by Selzer et al (US Patent No. 4,919,399).

Claim 1 is amended to specify the second end of the full-length leaf spring is detached from the small utility vehicle frame and axle. Claim 1 is patentable over McIntyre or Atkinson. Neither end of McIntyre's lower or longer leaf spring is detached from the frame and axle. Instead, McIntyre shows one end of main plate 7 of lower spring connected to rear axle 1, and the other end connected to arm 18 on frame 10. Neither end of Atkinson's lower or longer leaf spring is detached from the frame and axle. Instead, Atkinson shows the ends of leaf 6 attached to side bars 4 of a buggy.

Claim 1 also is amended to specify the first end of the half-length leaf spring is spaced from the second end of the full-length leaf spring when the vehicle has a first load condition; the first end of the half-length leaf spring contacting the second end of the full-length leaf spring when the vehicle has a second load condition heavier than the first load condition. Claim 1 is patentable over McIntyre or Atkinson. In Fig. 5 of McIntyre, neither end of the upper or shorter leaf spring 20 contacts an end of the lower or longer leaf spring 7 when the vehicle has a heavy load condition. In Atkinson, leaf spring 7 is side-by-side with leaf spring 5. Neither end of Atkinson's upper or shorter leaf spring 7 contacts an end of the lower or longer leaf 5 when the vehicle has a heavy load condition.

Claims 2-3 and 5 are patentable over McIntyre or Atkinson for at least the same reasons as claim 1.

Claim 6 is patentable over McIntyre or Atkinson for at least the same reasons as claim 1. Additionally, the cited references fail to show a spacer plate that has a thickness less than either the thickness of the full-length leaf spring or the thickness of the half-length leaf spring. McIntyre in Fig. 5 shows pintle 28 between leaf springs 7 and 20, but it has a thickness greater than either of the leaf springs. Atkinson fails

to show a spacer plate between leaf springs 5 and 7.

Claims 7 and 8 are patentable over McIntyre or Atkinson for at least the same reasons as claim 1.

Claim 10 is amended to specify a half-length leaf spring with a first end pivotally connected to a pair of plates connected to a vehicle frame member and a second end attached to an axle of the vehicle; and a full-length leaf spring under the half-length leaf spring with a first end pivotally connected to a vehicle frame member and a second end detached from the vehicle frame. Claim 10 is patentable over Pence, Atkinson or Selzer. Pence's overload spring 22 has a back-turned end portion 26 that is secured to the rear portion of leaf spring 16 with a pair of U-bolts. Pence's overload spring 22 does not have one end pivotally connected to a pair of plates, nor does it have a second end attached to a vehicle axle. Pence's leaf spring 16 does not have one end detached from the vehicle frame. Atkinson's shorter leaf spring 7 has both ends connected to the body, and neither end attached to an axle. Atkinson's longer leaf 6 has both ends connected to side bars 4, and neither end is detached from a vehicle frame. Selzer's reaction leaf 34, which is the shorter leaf, has one end attached over axle 32, but its other end is not attached to the vehicle frame. Selzer's spring leaves 16, 18, which are the longer leaves, have one end secured to frame member 24 and the other end secured with shackle 26. Neither end is detached from the vehicle frame.

Claim 10 also is amended to specify the first end of the half-length leaf spring is spaced from the second end of the full-length leaf spring in a first load condition, the first end of the half length leaf spring contacting the second end of the full-length leaf spring in a second load condition heavier than the first load condition. Pence's overload spring 16 may contact an intermediate portion of leaf spring 16, not the end of leaf spring 16, in a heavy load condition. Atkinson's shorter leaf spring 7 is side-by-side with longer leaf spring 5. Leaf spring 7 does not have one end that contacts an end of longer leaf 5 in a heavy load condition. Selzer does not show reaction leaf 34 contacting the end of spring leaves 16, 18 in a heavy load condition.

Claim 11 is patentable over Pence, Atkinson or Selzer for at least the same reasons as claim 10.

Claim 14 is amended to specify a connection point directly above the axle, and the first leaf spring has one end that is unattached to the frame or axle. Claim

14 is patentable over McIntyre or Atkinson. McIntyre does not secure spring 20 to spring 7 directly above axle 1. Additionally, McIntyre's lower or longer leaf spring 7 does not have an unattached end, but instead one end is attached to frame 10 at lower arm 18, and the other end is attached to axle 1. Atkinson does not connect upper leaf spring 7 to longer leaf spring 5 at a connection point directly above an axle. Nor does Atkinson's lower or longer leaf spring 5 have an end that is unattached to the frame or axle, but both ends are attached to side bars 4.

Claims 15 and 16 are patentable over McIntyre or Atkinson for at least the same reasons as claim 14.

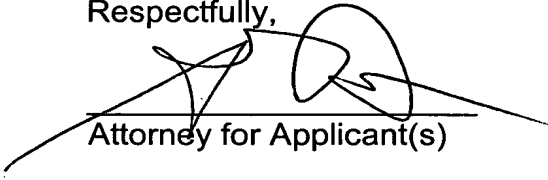
Claim 17 is patentable over McIntyre or Atkinson for at least the same reasons as claim 14. Additionally, the cited references fail to show a connection point intermediate the first leaf spring and at one end of the second leaf spring. McIntyre shows a connection point at 23 that is intermediate the upper leaf spring 20 and the lower leaf spring 7. Atkinson also shows a connection point 11 that is intermediate the upper leaf spring 7 and the lower leaf spring 5.

Claims 19 and 20 are patentable over McIntyre or Atkinson for at least the same reasons as claim 14.

In conclusion, it is believed that this application is in condition for allowance, and such allowance is respectfully requested.

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Respectfully,



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